

JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

EDWARD J. HANSON, SR.

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JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
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27 Nov. 1974
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Birth and Background -----	5
Father's Employment -----	6
Life on the Farm -----	7
Marriage -----	10
The Depression -----	14
The Canal and the Bridges -----	16
Wages in 1915 -----	18
Ice Wagons -----	19
Ingalls Park -----	20
Milk Wagons -----	22
Butcher Shops -----	23
Clothing Stores -----	24
World War II -----	25
The Ammunition Plant -----	26
The Good Old Days -----	28
Family Tribute -----	30

PEARCE: This is an interview with Edward J. Hanson, Sr. for the Joliet Junior College Oral History Program, at 29 Clairmont Avenue, Joliet, Illinois, November 21, 1974, at 7:30 p.m.

PEARCE: Mr. Hanson, I'd like for you to tell me when and where you were born.

HANSON: I was born four and a half miles from Mineral, Illinois, Bureau County.

PEARCE: When was this, Mr. Hanson?

HANSON: I was born March 19, 1889.

PEARCE: Where did your parents come from?

HANSON: My father came from Sweden. My mother was born in this country -- Irish parents.

PEARCE: Did your father ever tell you anything about Sweden or when he come from Sweden?

HANSON: Well, he came from Sweden when he was 25 years old. I wouldn't remember the year.

PEARCE: How many children did your parents have, Mr. Hanson?

HANSON: Five.

PEARCE: Where were you in the five? Were you the oldest?

HANSON: No, I was in the middle. There was two girls and three boys.

PEARCE: Do you remember what kind of work your father did?

HANSON: Well, he was a farmer until I was thirteen years old. During that time he also started a coal mine in his timber pasture, but the coal mine was a fizzle because more water came into the mine than there is in Lake Michigan. Pumps couldn't keep it out.

PEARCE: You mean coal mines are pretty dangerous work then, because they flooded out at times?

HANSON: Yes. They got down to the coal-- a seven-foot vein of coal, and that's very unusual; but they didn't mine but a very little bit. They had all kinds of pumps, but they just couldn't keep the water out of the mine.

PEARCE: Did your father ever take you down into the mine?

HANSON: I was down several times.

PEARCE: How old were you then?

HANSON: About nine years old.

PEARCE: Is it the kind of work you think you might have liked to have done?

HANSON: No, no, never.

PEARCE: What were some of the other jobs you remember your father having, or was he a farmer most of his life?

HANSON: No, he moved to a farm at Princeton, Illinois; and he bought out the street sprinkling business. So I and my oldest brother and he drove three sprinkling wagons for about fifteen years.

PEARCE: So most of your childhood was spent on the farm then, right Mr.

Hanson?

HANSON: No, I left the farm when I was thirteen. That's when we moved to Princeton, Illinois.

PEARCE: What can you tell me about your childhood? Do you have any fond memories of your childhood--anything that you did that stands out more than others?

HANSON: No, it was mostly work when I was a kid on the farm. We always had something to do. I drove horses in the field when I was eight years old. The last farm that we were on was very large--we had 160 acres of corn. Then there was a flood that came when the corn was ready to lay by, and we only had about fifteen acres to husk. So the next spring we left the farm and moved to Princeton.

PEARCE: Did you have any animals on your farm, or was it just a crop farm?

HANSON: Oh, yes. We had hogs and sheep, horses and cattle-- the same as most farms did in those days, the same as they have today.

PEARCE: How big was the farm?

HANSON: About 300 acres.

PEARCE: Where did you go to school, Mr. Hanson?

HANSON: I went to school, when I started I was six years old, in Neponset, Illinois, until the sixth grade. Then for a year I went to a country school; and, of course, after we moved to Princeton, I went to grade school and high school there. I graduated from high school in 1907.

PEARCE: What were some of the chores you had when you were a child? You

had chores around the farm and around the house when you were in Princeton, didn't you?

HANSON: Yes. By the time I was six years old, I had to go to the timber pasture half a mile up the road to get the milk cows, drive them home for milking, and take them back up in the morning before school. We moved to Princeton when I was thirteen, and for a summer I drove a wagon for a feed company, that is, livestock feed. In those days a good many people that lived in town had a horse and buggy. Lots of them had a cow, of course. Those animals had to be fed, so they would buy feed from the feed store.

PEARCE: When did you meet your wife, Mr. Hanson?

HANSON: In 1912.

PEARCE: And when did you get married?

HANSON: 1915.

PEARCE: What was it like in those days to court a girl?

HANSON: Well, I think we had a better time than they do today.

PEARCE: Is it true they used to have chaperones go around with you on dates?

HANSON: No, I never had one, only the horse; and I don't think horses understood very much.

PEARCE: Where were some of the places you would go on a date?

HANSON: Well. . .

PEARCE: Did you go dancing or roller skating?

HANSON: Yes, we used to go to dances. Sometimes within fifty miles of home. I had-- I used to have several medals I won at dances. Those were the good old days!

PEARCE: How many children did you and your wife have?

HANSON: Five. Well, we had seven. . . one baby died a few hours after birth, and we lost one little fellow in 1922 with the influenza. He was fifteen months old. I have five living sons. The oldest one will be, maybe I shouldn't give their names or ages, but the oldest one will be 58, and the youngest one will be 48.

PEARCE: What were some of your fond memories with your children, some of the places you went, and some of the things you did with your boys?

HANSON: Well, we never went very much-- maybe a little bit at times. These boys were raised during our great depression of the 1930's. It was pretty hard to go anywhere; there was very little money floating around in those days. There couldn't have been very much money around; I remember very clearly. We used to buy two pounds of lard for a nickel in the grocery store and the Boston Store basement.

PEARCE: Do you remember your first job, Mr. Hanson?

HANSON: Well, (laughter) my first job, if you want to call it a job, was hauling water for threshers.

PEARCE: And how much money did you make at that job?

HANSON: (Laughter) Nothing. Later on they were paid a very little bit, and that was 50 cents a day. Like it does today, it took 26 men to run the

threshing outfit, haul bundles from the field, haul grain from the separator and separate the grain from the straw. We all looked forward to the big meals. Each farm lady would try to outdo the other; and there were always very, very good meals, so the threshers were well-fed.

PEARCE: What were some of your other jobs?

HANSON: Well, I worked in a grocery store part-time when I was a kid. I got 50 cents a day for that, too.

PEARCE: When did you move to Joliet, Mr. Hanson?

HANSON: 1915.

PEARCE: And this is where you raised your children, right here in Joliet?

HANSON: That's right.

PEARCE: Did you live at 29 Clairmont Avenue at that time?

HANSON: Oh no. We rented places from 1915 until 1922. We lived on Catalpa Street for a short time, Liberty Street for six months, Reichman Street (on the south side of Joliet) for six years, and I built a little place on Jessie Street. I believe it was a park area at that time. We lived there until 1940. Then we bought the present home where I live now.

PEARCE: You said you moved to Joliet in 1915, and you were also married in 1915. Were you married in Joliet, Mr. Hanson?

HANSON: No, I was married in Freeport, Illinois.

PEARCE: Why was this?

HANSON: The reason was my wife had known a minister in her home town, went

to church in Freeport; and she wanted to have him perform the ceremony.

PEARCE: Do you have any other memories of your marriage that you would like to tell us about?

HANSON: No, I don't think so.

PEARCE: O. K. What was Joliet like when you first moved here?

HANSON: Well, it was a very good town. The saying years ago was: "If you couldn't find work in Joliet, you couldn't find work anywhere."

PEARCE: Was that because of the steel mill being here at that time?

HANSON: I think it was, and then there were several other little industries here at that time-- Bates Machine Company-- several little factories.

PEARCE: What were the roads like in Joliet at that time?

HANSON: They were mostly dirt or gravel and stone. There was very little paving. My first job in Joliet was the Woodruff Hotel. That was built in 1915.

PEARCE: What did you do there?

HANSON: Carpenter work.

PEARCE: Was most of the travel by horse and buggy at that time?

HANSON: A big share. Yes, a big share. Automobiles were coming in then pretty strong, but there were many horse and buggies. Most all of the farm work was done by horses in those days.

PEARCE: Were there any trolleys in Joliet at this time, or did they come in later?

HANSON: Oh, no. There were streetcars here at that time. At that time the cars went from Joliet to Chicago, through Lockport, Lemont, Willow Springs and Argo.

PEARCE: Did you ever take a trolley ride from Joliet to Chicago?

HANSON: Oh, yes. We went to Chicago many times.

PEARCE: How long did it take, and what did it cost?

HANSON: Well, the cost wasn't too much. I don't remember the cost. My wife had a sister up there, and we used to go up quite often. It would only take about an hour and fifteen minutes.

PEARCE: Did you have a horse and buggy of your own?

HANSON: Oh, yes.

PEARCE: How many horses did you have?

HANSON: Oh, we had as many as a dozen horses. I had a horse and buggy of my own.

PEARCE: Did you have names for your horses?

HANSON: Oh, yes.

PEARCE: What were they?

HANSON: Well, there was Prince, Cap, Kate, June, and several others that I don't remember now.

PEARCE: You say "those were the good old days." Do you believe that's true?

HANSON: I've always thought that way. I enjoyed myself very much in those days. There was not much money around, and there was not much money needed. Not like it is today.

PEARCE: Were you in World War I, Mr. Hanson?

HANSON: No.

PEARCE: What do you remember about World War I?

HANSON: Well, I don't remember too much. I know I was working in the steel mill at that time. Carpenter work. At the start of that war I had two babies. That was the reason I wasn't in the war. They didn't draft men with wives and babies. And, of course, I was in the plant and was working through the war. They had the draft on then, the same as we had in World War II.

PEARCE: You mentioned you were a carpenter at the Woodruff Hotel and also at the steel mill. Was this your main occupation?

HANSON: Yes.

PEARCE: Were you just a general carpenter, or did you do special carpenter work?

HANSON: Carpenter foreman a big share of the time. I worked outside in Joliet from 1922 until 1934. The time that all the rush was on putting up new buildings -- the Rialto Theatre, Louis Joliet Hotel, the Union National Bank, Elks Building, Montgomery Ward Building and several others, and many houses.

PEARCE: Did you work on the Rialto Building?

HANSON: No, we were building the Louis Joliet Hotel at the time, and I was over there.

PEARCE: There's talk now of possibly tearing down the Rialto Building in the next few years. How do you feel about this? It's a beautiful old building, and a lot of people hate to see it go.

HANSON: It is a beautiful building. There is a group now, maybe more than one group, that's trying to preserve it. I hope they do. It cost an enormous amount of money to build that building. It's a good, substantial building. I don't think it should be torn down. There's many uses they could find for it. Look at the old Canal Building in Lockport. That was almost ready to fall down when the Historical Society took it over, and they fixed it up. There's enjoyment for many, many people going through there to see the old historical things in the building now. They could do the same thing with the Rialto Building.

PEARCE: I understand you've never owned a car. Is there a reason for this?

HANSON: As I told you, I was raising a family during the depression days. There was no money for a car. When our boys, one after another, got old enough to have a car, there were five cars standing around the yard. We didn't need a car. The boys were always standing ready to take me or their mother any place we wanted to go.

PEARCE: How was it raising five boys during the depression? Did the boys help out a lot?

HANSON: Well, they helped out some, of course; but they were all small.

The depression started in the fall of 1929. The oldest boy was born in 1916, so he wasn't too much of a boy at that time. But they all helped, did their share wherever they could. You couldn't buy a job, so if you had a steady job, you were a pretty lucky person.

PEARCE: Do you remember anything else about the depression, the hardships you may have had yourself or other families you know of?

HANSON: Well, I know it was tough. Some of us had to go along the railroad tracks and pick up coal. Others went to the coal cars and picked it off of the coal cars.

PEARCE: How long did the depression last?

HANSON: Well, I had a job. It was close to this little town of Minooka out here, about a mile and a half from Minooka, a farm. I built a two-story chicken house, a machine shed, raised the house. I worked out there all one summer, one fall, and part of the winter; but they called me back to the steel mill in the fall of 1936. The depression wasn't all over at that time. I'd say the depression was still on around the '40's, when the next war started.

PEARCE: You said before that you had several horses. Did you have any other animals during the first part of your marriage? Did you raise chickens or have any animals at your house?

HANSON: Oh, yes! We had chickens, and the boys raised rabbits. That's what helped us pretty much during the depression. For feed, there was a field about a half a mile from our place where they went through with a husker to husk corn. There was no fences; they couldn't put stock in there

to feed out the corn that was left, so we used to pick corn up in that field to feed the chickens.

PEARCE: Were there any special places you would go as a family, any place you would go for picnics?

HANSON: Oh, yes. We used to go on outings, and we used to go to a family reunion every year. We still have the reunion down at Princeton, Illinois every August. I am, right now, the oldest member of the organization.

PEARCE: Dellwood Park was supposed to be a fabulous place years ago. . .

HANSON: Which it was.

PEARCE: Did you ever go there on a family outing?

HANSON: Yes, we went there. Dellwood Park was the nicest little park around this part of the country at that time. The streetcars used to run up into the park. It belonged to the Electric Railway Company at that time. Now it belongs to the Lockport Park District.

PEARCE: Were you in Joliet when they put the lift bridges over the canal?

HANSON: Yes.

PEARCE: What do you remember about these?

HANSON: Well, there were lots of fights about the bridges. Mr. Hennessy was, I think, the mayor at the time. Some people wanted lift bridges, and some people wanted fixed bridges built way up in the air; but they got the lift bridges. I think that Jefferson Street Bridge was built first, either that or the Cass Street. They were both built about the same time. Then

the Jackson Street, then the Ruby Street, then the McDonough Street. Now they're talking about lowering the waterway through Joliet so we won't have to lift the bridges anymore. I don't know whether they will do that or not.

PEARCE: Could you tell me a little bit about the building of the canal in the beginning of the 1920's?

HANSON: Well, the walls were all built in Joliet by contractors who called themselves Green & Sons.

PEARCE: What did they use to dig out the canal, dynamite and bulldozers?

HANSON: Yes. Through Joliet, of course, they encountered rock all the way through. There were not too many big heavy machines as we see today.

PEARCE: How long did it take them to dig the canal?

HANSON: Oh, they did it in spells here and there. It must have been, anyhow, fifteen or twenty years from start to finish.

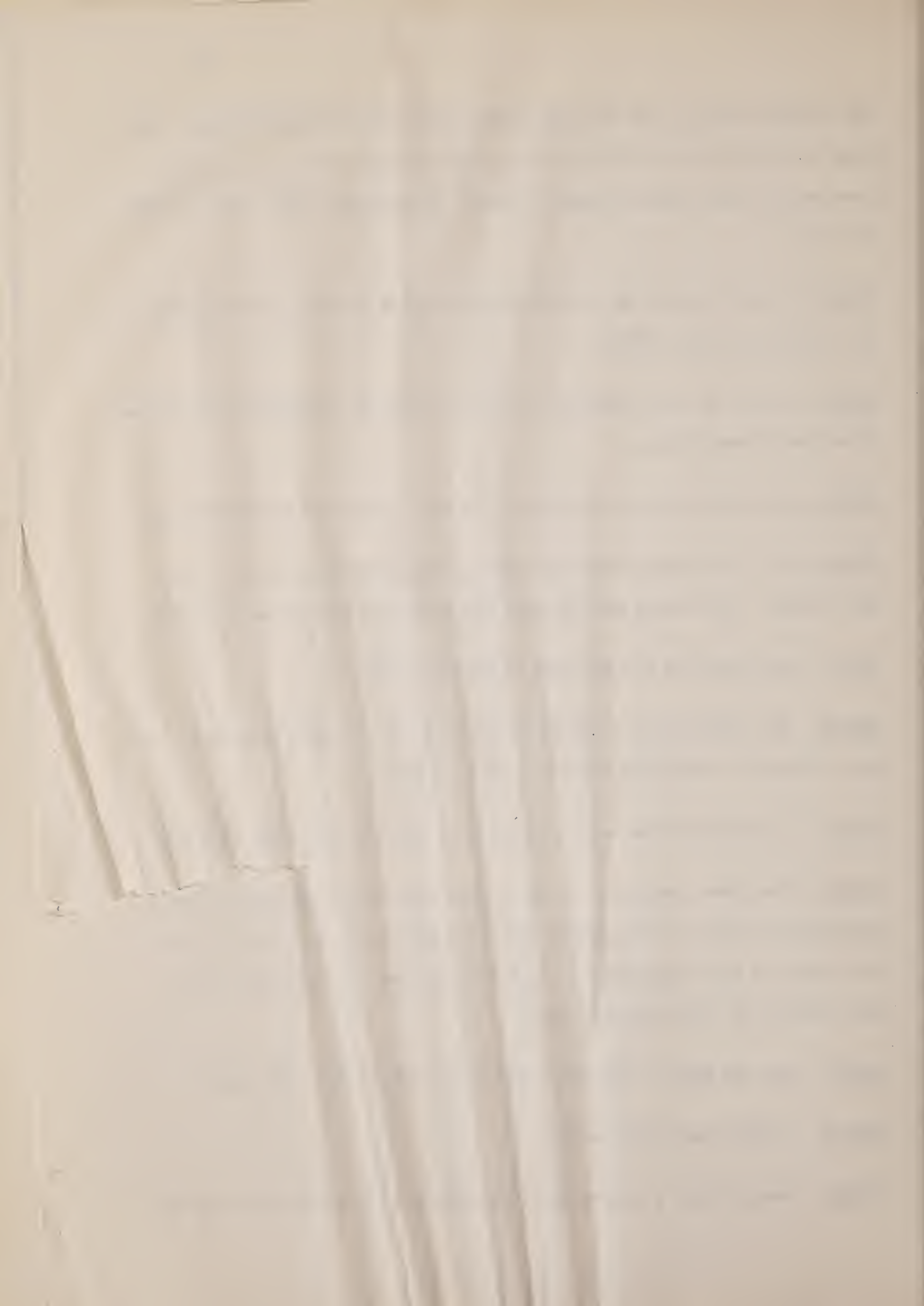
PEARCE: I understand the work crews used to work day and night digging.

HANSON: Sometimes they did. It was a long time getting started. They'd appropriate money and the engineering department would use it all up before they got any digging done. That was done two or three times until they finally got into the real work.

PEARCE: Was the work of the canal started in the north or the south?

HANSON: I think the north, mostly.

PEARCE: How did they keep the water from the old river from entering the



canal?

HANSON: Well, they trenched the DesPlaines River along the side. They trenched it so that it was on one side. Then, when they got that finished, they turned the river there and worked on the other side. That was the way it was done through from Lockport down. As I remember, they built the locks south of Lockport first so they could hold the water back there.

PEARCE: Was the river very clean at that time?

HANSON: The DuPage River was, yes. All kinds of fish in the DuPage River. I used to fish there. I think probably up above Lockport there is yet, in the old DuPage River. There's no fishing that's sanitary until you get down below Starved Rock. The river has a tendency to be very slow by the time it gets down there, so there's fishermen fishing all during the season.

PEARCE: You mentioned you helped build the Woodruff Hotel. . .

HANSON: Yes, that was the first job I worked on when I came to Joliet in 1915. Old Farnell, Hanson and Peterson had the contract to build it; and I worked for them.

PEARCE: How long did it take to build the hotel?

HANSON: I don't know exactly, because I left there in the fall and went to work at the steel company. It was called the Carnegie Illinois Steel at that time, and later it was taken over by U.S. Steel.

PEARCE: Can you recall how much money you were bringing home on payday at that time, being a carpenter foreman?

HANSON: Before I was foreman, we worked ten hours a day and was paid 30 cents an hour. I was made foreman, after being there a short time. I think I made 62 cents an hour. That was fairly good money in those days.

PEARCE: You mean a man could make a comfortable living making that money?

HANSON: Oh, yes. Everything else was accordingly low. You could buy a Ford car for about \$460.

PEARCE: A lot of people still talk about the old ice wagons. Could you tell me a little bit about the icemen and the ice wagons in those days?

HANSON: Oh, yes. They were in every town of any size. Joliet had several ice wagons. One of the old timers on the ice wagon was John Sanders. He was on the ice wagon for many, many years. He was a big, broad-boned Swede and a very fine man.

PEARCE: How did you buy the ice in those days, by the block or several blocks at a time? And how much did it cost?

HANSON: We had iceboxes that would hold fifty pounds. You could buy it in any amount-- ten, twenty-five, fifty. Our icebox held fifty. It would last about two days.

PEARCE: What was the cost of a ten-pound block of ice?

HANSON: Well, a twenty-five pound block of ice was, I think, ten cents. There were cards to put in the window that was to notify the iceman how much you wanted and the day you wanted it. He cut the piece of ice you

wanted and put it in the icebox.

PEARCE: On the wall here you have pictures of your five sons. Could you tell me a little bit about each one of your sons as they grew up?

HANSON: Well, the boys were raised during the depression years. It was pretty hard raising five sons, but they all grew up to be very fine boys and very good men. The oldest boy and the next to the oldest and the youngest still live in the Joliet vicinity. One boy lives in California, and the other boy lives twelve miles east of Cleveland, in southern Cleveland. I have fourteen grandchildren. The youngest one now is twelve years old. Three of them died.

PEARCE: What were some of the schools like that your boys went to?

HANSON: Well, the oldest boy went to Washington School, on the corner of Fourth and Richards Street. He only went there for a short time; then we moved out to Ingalls Park locality, and the three oldest boys attended Middle School on the corner of Briggs and Washington, a one-room school. There's a gasoline station on that corner now. Then they built the Culbertson School across from the opposite corner, and they all went there up until the sixth grade. Then in the sixth grade they went down to Washington Junior High at the corner of Richards and Fourth Avenue. From there, they went to Central High School and graduated from there.

PEARCE: Your home here on Clairmont Avenue is in the far eastern section of Ingalls Park. What was it like here in Ingalls Park when you first moved here?

HANSON: Well, there were no homes here at all. The only homes this side of. . . what street was it? The old Ingalls Park, the first subdivision

on the east side was mostly built shortly after the World's Fair in Chicago, in 1893. Two blocks from Briggs Street, Davidson, then what's the other street in there?

PEARCE: Jessie or Peale?

HANSON: Yes, Peale. That subdivision was two blocks wide, and about five blocks long. There were no houses whatever this side of Peale Street when we came out here in 1922, only on Park Road. There were three or four houses north of Washington Street. The old racetrack barns were still there, and the racetrack was still there. There was one house on Jessie Street. I suppose that had been built by the developers of the subdivision. It wasn't occupied when we came out here. We built about five lots south of that from Jessie Street, three-fourths of a block from Washington. There were no houses east of that, only as I said, on Park Road. They all came later.

PEARCE: What was the road like getting out here to Clairmont Avenue?

HANSON: Well, it was always a gravel road. Streetcars ran out here at the time.

PEARCE: Were the streetcars on what is now the present Washington Street?

HANSON: Yes. They ran out to Cherry Hill Road. In fact, they put in all new track, I think, around 1930. They put in all new tracks from Boulder Avenue until the end of the line. In fact, those tracks are still there under the pavement. They only used those tracks about three years -- all welded joints, steel tied most of the way; that's all under the pavement. They never removed the rails.

PEARCE: We talked before about the icemen. Did you also have a milkman that would deliver milk to your doorstep?

HANSON: Oh, we had many milkmen. There was Flint's Dairy where Meadowgold is now, and there was a dairy on Washington Street between Eastern Avenue and Richards Street. There was a dairy out on Richards Street and Weber's Dairy. They all had a crew of wagons that delivered milk on every street in the city. There's only one milk wagon that I know of that is running today, and that's run by George Tonelli. His father used to run a store on Washington Street between Peale and Jessie for many years. In fact, the store is still there; but it's run now by the Southern Fried Doughnut people. There's only one wagon, I say, that still delivers milk to homes. There might be others; but if there is, I don't know about them.

PEARCE: Did you ever have any problem with the milk freezing on your doorstep in the winter time?

HANSON: Oh, yes. It would freeze and raise the cap up a couple of inches. That was the cream. There was cream on milk in those days. Now, what little cream there is, it's broken up; and it's in the milk. It doesn't rise to the top. They call that homogenized milk, and they sell it for \$1.50 a gallon. When I was a kid and first moved to town from the country, I was thirteen years old. I milked two cows, and I had little tin pails that would hold a quart of milk. I delivered milk from four to six o'clock to customers who lived three or four blocks from home, for four cents a quart.

PEARCE: Were your five boys very big eaters?

HANSON: Well, no. I think they were about average. They were all good, healthy boys. Of course, boys, when they're growing up, they're like ducks-- they eat all the time.

PEARCE: The price of groceries is sky high now. What were the prices like for groceries in those days?

HANSON: Well, of course, they had to be very, very much lower because the wages were very much lower. I've seen the times where a man with a family worked for a dollar a day. I've worked many days with a team and wagon, hauled gravel and different jobs for \$4.00 a day for the team and man. Of course, I say prices were much lower in those days than they are today-- if they hadn't been, everybody would have starved.

PEARCE: Much of the meat you buy today in the grocery store is frozen meat. How was the fresh meat then compared to the frozen meat of these days?

HANSON: In those days there were grocery stores and butcher shops, and most of the shops did their own butchering. When you went there to any of the shops, you got real meat, not like it is today. I don't believe there's one shop in Joliet that handles the very best grade of meat. That all goes to the big cities and their big, fancy restaraunts in the hotels. In the old days when you got meat from the butcher shops, you could cut it with a fork. Many times when I was a kid, and we'd go to the butcher shop to buy meat, they'd give you a pound or two of liver; and suet was always free-- you never paid for suet. My mother used to make suet pudding that would melt in your mouth. When we first moved to town, we had ten acres of land just at the edge of town. I raised some pigs. One time I kept the pigs for over a year and a half. One of them weighed

500 pounds; a couple of them weighed 600 pounds. I sold those pigs for three cents a pound.

PEARCE: Did you ever butcher any of your own pigs?

HANSON: Oh, yes. When I was a kid on the farm, I always butchered three just about this time of year-- Thanksgiving time. It was usually fresh pork. Some was put down in brine; some of it was smoked. Hams and bacon were smoked in the smokehouse. Then we had fresh meat and smoked meat later on. We butchered young beef, and my dad used to fix us some of that for corned beef-- put it down in brine. That's one thing a farmer can do; and while the rest of the people starve, he can still eat.

PEARCE: Was meat very hard to get during the depression?

HANSON: (laughter) Just about the same as everything else-- everything was hard to get. As I said before, if I had a nickel in my pocket, I could buy two pounds of lard for a nickel.

PEARCE: Did you ever hear of the terms "Black Monday" and "Black Friday" used during the depression?

HANSON: Well, I don't know as I have. They were all black days for many of the people during the depression-- one day was about the same as the other. Most of the time we just sat in the rocking chair and rocked. In the summertime I had a big garden, and that kept me a little busy. You couldn't buy a job.

PEARCE: Were there many clothing stores in Joliet back in the early years?

HANSON: Oh, yes. There was Dinet-Nachbour, Boston Store, Edsel Pratt,

Smith & Blackburn.

PEARCE: How did the clothes compare to the clothes of these days?

HANSON: Well, there weren't so many frills as there are nowadays; clothes were more plain.

PEARCE: What year did the depression end?

HANSON: Well, I'd say it was around 1940. Then World War II came along, of course; and everything picked up. But before the depression and back until the time it started in the fall of 1929, things were quite dull.

PEARCE: Do you remember where you were and what your reactions were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

HANSON: Well, I must have been working then at the Coke Plant; it belonged to the Steel Company. Yes, that's where I was, because I started there before the depression was over in the fall of 1936; and I stayed there until 1954, when I was retired.

PEARCE: What was your reaction to the bombing of Pearl Harbor?

HANSON: Well, it was one of the most cowardly things that was ever pulled off by any country. As I understand it, there was high-ranking Japanese sitting in President Roosevelt's office at the time it happened. It sure caught the United States by surprise!

PEARCE: Were any of your boys in World War II?

HANSON: All five sons served in the army in World War II, and they were

all overseas, some of them in the thick of the battles.

PEARCE: Were they all in the European countries, or were some of them in the Pacific?

HANSON: No, they were all over the world. Jack was in Okinawa and Japan. Wendell was in China and Africa. Arlo was in China part of the time and in Africa also. Lawrence, next to the oldest, was in Germany, Italy, and all through that part of Europe during the war. The oldest boy, Ed, was in the Aleutian Islands; and then he was sent to Okinawa. We can thank the Lord that they all came home and without a scratch.

PEARCE: Did all your boys write home often?

HANSON: Very often.

PEARCE: Can you remember any of the stories they may have written to you about?

HANSON: No, they never, to this day, related many of their experiences. Lawrence, next to the oldest boy, saw some terrible things during the war; but he would never talk about them. No, when they would write, it was mostly about friends they had met; and they wanted to know how everything was around home. Concerning battles, they never had much to say.

PEARCE: How much did the ammunition plant south of Joliet here help build up the economy in this area?

HANSON: Oh, there were many thousand that got work there. There were

even lots of people that came from Chicago to work. As I said before, Arthur States was willed all the land down there; and he sold it to the government for the ammunition works. He was given the privilege of tearing down the buildings that were on the property, mostly farm buildings. He had a sister that lived a mile and a half this side of Minooka. They took all the lumber from these torn-down farm buildings to her property which included a five-acre orchard. They had more lumber than any lumberyard in the country. I don't know what he did with it, I suppose sold it to contractors. Lots of people wanted to see wars, I guess, the ones who didn't have boys to send. Wars created jobs. Big manufacturers like to see wars to help their profits.

PEARCE: I understand that the Rock Island Railroad used to run right through the middle of Joliet in a different location than it presently is.

HANSON: Well, some of the old tracks are still there where the Rock Island came in from the east. If you go under the present Rock Island viaduct over Henderson Avenue, you'll see the old tracks. It came down about where the middle of the Central High School is now, just about the middle, or maybe a little north of the middle. They went through there and proceeded to where they cut across Jefferson Street and Chicago Street just about where the present corner of Chicago and Jefferson Streets is now. They then went across the corner of the old courthouse yard. The Rock Island Freight Depot, I think, is in nearly the same place now as it was then. There used to be a building down there that burnt down. They called it the "Flatiron Building." The tracks ran through and across Jefferson Street next to this building. After the "Flatiron Building"

burnt down, the Coney Island hot dog stand was built there. The corner of the building was built at an angle where the tracks went through.

PEARCE: In your lifetime I guess you've seen many changes in means of travel. Have you ever flown in an airplane, Mr. Hanson?

HANSON: Never.

PEARCE: Do you think you'd ever like to fly on an airplane?

HANSON: Well, I probably would if I had good reason to fly. I wouldn't fly just for the pleasure of flying. A few years back I figured on taking a trip to California, but I didn't even go.

PEARCE: How do you feel about life today, compared to "the good old days" back before the depression?

HANSON: Well, in a way I think years ago people were happier than they are today. Years ago people didn't have to lock their doors. Never anything touched. Today, if you go out your back door, somebody's breaking in your front door!

PEARCE: Very true.

HANSON: People were happier, I think, in those days. You know, when I was a kid on the farm, there were country schools about every two or three miles; and in the localities where I lived, schoolhouses were never locked. While driving the team at night, if a storm came up, we'd always find a place to get shelter in the schoolhouse-- same in the winter. In heavy snows, if you wanted to get warm, you could go to the schoolhouse. There was always coal or wood for a fire. If we had those schoolhouses today, and they were left open, they would all be burned down by the next day!

PEARCE: What is your impression of the hippie movement and the women's liberation of this day?

HANSON: Well, I suppose in a way it's all right. I think women should have privileges, same as a man. If they're capable of doing a job the same as a man, they should have the job. If they do the same work as a man, they should have the same pay. We had a little taste of the women working on different jobs during World War II, but they weren't trained. They couldn't do the same work as a man. I think today there are lots of capable women that can do the same work as a man can do.

PEARCE: What do you think about the long hair and the clothes the youth are wearing these days?

HANSON: Well, I don't know what to call it. I think it's something that will pass. They'll get tired of that long hair, and they'll come back to the short hair again. Maybe one of the reasons they're wearing this long hair is the price of haircuts. I think it's a shame that haircuts have gone to where they are. I know I can get into a barber chair, and I'm out of the chair in ten minutes; and it only cost me \$3.50. Poor barbers-- I think they're cutting their own throats! Lots of the women are cutting their children's hair-- and men too. I learned the barber trade during the depression, when I cut the boys' hair. I had a brother-in-law who learned the barber trade when he was a young man. During the depression all the neighbors around used to come and get their hair cut. He had a barber chair in the basement. He never accepted any money. Some of them would bring him little gifts; some of them would bring him wine or a quart of moonshine. He would set it up on the shelf; and then if any of his customers were accustomed to drinking a little bit,

after they would get their hair cut, he'd give them a shot of moonshine; and he would tell them it was "on the house". He always liked to treat his customers right because he didn't like to lose any of them.

PEARCE: When did your wife pass away, Mr. Hanson?

HANSON: March 1, 1956.

PEARCE: And have you lived here by yourself ever since that time?

HANSON: I've been here by myself since that time.

PEARCE: Other than the depression do you think you've lived a very happy life, or is there anything you would have liked to have changed during your lifetime?

HANSON: Well, I suppose there's lots of things I would have changed; but as far as the family is concerned, I couldn't be more blessed than with the sons that I had. They're all fine, upstanding boys; and I had one of the best wives man could wish for-- I was fortunate. And my boys are all very happily married. If I and my wife had gone out and picked their wives, we couldn't have done as good a job as they've done.

PEARCE: I think that about covers everything, Mr. Hanson. Thank you very much for the interview. It has been very interesting talking to you.

INDEX

- Africa, 26
airplane, 28
Aleutian Islands, 26
ammunition plant, 26
Argo, IL, 12
automobile(s) 11, 14

barber, 29
Bates Machine Company, 11
Black Friday, 24
Black Monday, 24
Boulder Avenue, 21
boys, (see sons)
Briggs Street, 20, 21
brother(s), 5, 6
bulldozers, 17
Bureau County, 5
butchering, 23, 24
butcher shops, 23

California, 20, 28
canal, 16-18
Canal Building, 14
car, 14
Carnegie Illinois Steel, 18
carpentry, 11, 13
Cass Street Bridge, 16
Catalpa Street, 10
cattle, 7-8
Central High School, 20, 27
chaperones, 8
Cherry Hill Road, 21
Chicago, 12, 21, 27
Chicago Street, 27
chickens, 15-16
childhood, 7
children, 9-10
China, 26
chores, 7-8
Clairmont Avenue, 5, 10, 20-21
Cleveland, 20
clothing stores, 24
coal, 6, 15
coal mine, 6
Coney Island Hotdog Stand, 28
corn, 7
corned beef, 24
corn huskers, 15
Culbertson School, 20

dances, 9
dancing, 8
dating, 8
Davidson Street, 21
Dellwood Park, 16
depression, 9, 14-15, 20, 24-25, 28-30
DesPlaines River, 18
Dinet-Nachbour, 24
draft, 13
ducks, 23
DuPage River, 18
dynamite, 17

Eastern Avenue, 22
Edsel Pratt (store), 24
Electric Railway Company, 16
Elks Building, 13
Europe, 26

family, 5, 30
farm, 7-8, 15
farmer, 6
Farnell, Hanson, & Peterson, 18
father, 5-6
feed company, 8
fish, 18
"Flatiron Building", 27
Flint's Dairy, 22
flood, 7
Ford car, 19
foreman, 13, 19
Fourth Avenue, 20
Freeport, IL, 10-11

garden, 24
Germany, 26
grandchildren, 20
Green & Sons, contractors, 17
groceries, 23
grocery store, 9-10, 23

haircuts, 29
Henderson Avenue, 27
"hippie" movement, 29
Historical Society (of Will County), 14
hog(s), 7, 23-24
horse and buggy, 11-12
horse(s), 7-8, 11-12

icebox(es), 19-20
icemen, 19, 22
ice wagon(s), 19
Ingalls Park, 20
Italy, 26

Jackson Street Bridge, 17
Japan, 26
Jefferson Street, 27
Jefferson Street Bridge, 16
Jessie Street, 10, 21-22
Joliet, 10-13, 16-17, 19-20,
23-24, 26-27

Lake Michigan, 6
Lemont, 12
Liberty Street, 10
lift bridge, 16
liver, 23
Lockport, 12, 14, 18
Lockport Park District, 16
locks, 18
Louis Joliet Hotel, 13-14

marriage, 8, 10-11, 15
Meadowgold (milk), 22
medals, 9
Middle School, 20
milk, 22
milking, 8, 22
Mineral, IL, 5
minister, 10
Minooka, IL, 15, 27
Montgomery Ward Building, 13
mother, 5

Neponset, IL, 7

Okinawa, 26

Pacific (theatre of war), 26
parents, 5
Park Road, 21
Peale Street, 21-22
Pearl Harbor, 25
picnic, 16
pigs, (see hogs)
Princeton, IL, 6-8, 16
pumps, 6

rabbits, 15
Reichman Street, 10
reunion, 16
Rialto Theatre, 13-14

Richards Street, 20, 22
roads, 11
Rock Island Railroad, 27
Rock Island R. R. Freight
Depot, 27

roller skating, 8
Roosevelt, President, 25
Ruby Street Bridge, 17

Sanders, John, 19
school(s), 7-8, 20, 27-28
sheep, 7
sisters, 5
Smith & Blackburn, clothiers, 25
smokehouse, 24
sons, 9, 14-15, 20, 22-23,
25-26, 30
Southern Fried Doughnut
Shop, 22
Starved Rock, 18
States, Mr. Arthur, 27
steel mill, 11, 13, 15, 18
streetcar(s), 12, 16, 21
street sprinkling business, 6
suet, 23
suet pudding, 23
Sweden, 5

threshers, 9
threshing, 10
Tonelli, Mr. George, 22
trolley(s), 11-12

Union National Bank, 13
United States, the, 25
United States Steel, 18

wages, 18, 23
wagons, 6, 8, 19, 22, 23
Washington School, (Jr. High),
20

Washington Street, 20-22
Weber's Dairy, 22
wife, 8, 10, 12, 14, 30
Willow Springs, 12
Woodruff Hotel, 11, 13, 18
World's Fair, 21
World War I, 13
World War II, 15, 25, 29

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